

UNDER A DARKENING SKY

her to Lucca, and it is to the pen of the former that we owe the account of her visit to this most beautiful of Tuscan cities, with its vines and olives and distant hills of marble, where Ruskin, almost exactly five hundred years later, saw "one glow of calm glory and perfect possibilities of human life." The rulers of the Republic and private citizens alike received her with every manifestation of reverence and affection; for the signs and wonders, both spiritual and material, that she wrought here as previously at Siena and at Pisa, together with the burning words that she uttered, convinced them that she "taught as one that had authority, and not as the scribes."¹ A little group of letters still preserved, addressed by her after her departure to women of Lucca with those beautifully sounding names, Mellina, Colomba, Caterina, Chiara, Bartolommea, Lagina, shows us the intense personal love for herself that she aroused in their hearts, to such an extent that her presence had become all in all to them. "My beloved daughters," she says in one, "love God without any intermediary. And, if you wish to love Him through me, wretched and miserable woman as I am, I will teach you where to find me. That you may not depart from this true love, go to that most sweet and venerable Cross with the sweet enamoured Magdalene; there you will find the Lamb and me, where your desires can be fed and nourished and fulfilled. In this way would I have you seek me and all created things; let this be your standard and your consolation. And do not think, because my body is far from you, that my affection and my care for your salvation is taken from you; nay, it is greater when I am absent bodily than when present. Know you not that the holy disciples knew and felt their Master more after His departure than before? For they took such delight in His humanity that they sought no further; but, after His presence had gone, they began to know and understand His goodness. Therefore said the first Truth:

¹ Cafiarini's account of Catherine's stay at Lucca is in his *Supphmentum*, Tantucci, pp. 107, 108. Neri di Landoccio, in his *capitok* in praise of St. Catherine (printed at the end of Toresauo's edition of the Letters) refers to a promise she made him there.